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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews what it calls a classic book in the field of higher education, 1952's "The Development and Scope of Higher Education," by Richard Hofstadter and C. DeWitt Hardy. The paper describes the main points of the book, which was written as part of a series, "Nature and Needs of Higher Education," prepared for the Commission on Financing Higher Education and sponsored by the Association of American Universities. The paper asserts that Hofstadter provides a superb overview of the historical development of college curricula, and it discusses Hofstadter's view that the primary weakness of American higher education is the assumption that education ought to pay its own way and continuously justify itself to others. The paper then discusses Hardy's thesis on the transformation by modern scholarship and scientific method of research into a profession, and his position on the value of a general education. (EV)

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Recalling Hofstadter and Hardy's Classic:

THE DEVELOPMENT AND SCOPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

by Cameron Fincher

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Hofstadter, Richard and Hardy, C. DeWitt. *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1952. LA 226 H55.

The enjoyment of developing a list of one hundred outstanding books on American higher education lasted only until it became necessary to exclude many well deserving books. This was an experience that George Keller, Grady Bogue, John Thelin, and I had not anticipated in pulling together our list of books believed to be classics in the academic discipline of higher education[1].

If we had accepted a criterion of minimizing "postdecisional regrets" in making our final choices, we still would not have been prepared for the difficulty in deleting so many excellent books from our list. Try as we could to rationalize our deletions, we could do no better than set an arbitrary limit of two books per author or defer to the persuasive opinion of at least one of the four judges.

Although apologies are due to the many outstanding books not included in the final list of one hundred books, the most intense "postdecisional regret" (for me personally) resulted from the deletion of Hofstadter and Hardy's Development and Scope of Higher Education. There is some consolation in the fact that two other books by Hofstadter—"Academic Freedom" and "Anti-Intellectualism in American Life"—were firmly entrenched in the list, but an apology would seem appropriate.[2]

Twelve years ago, I suggested a series of articles in which well known classics would be revisited in the Journal of Higher Education. The idea of such a series did not sell, and my review of Hofstadter and Hardy's classic written as an "prototype" was filed and forgotten. In 1999 when we began our work on one hundred classics, I retrieved the review of Hofstadter and Hardy's book for suggestions in writing annotations. After re-reading the review, I decided that it still said what I had wanted to say in 1987—and thus, it appears in this issue of IHE Perspectives—with a minimum of editing.

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Hofstadter and Hardy's classic *Development and Scope* was one in a series prepared for the Commission on Financing Higher Education, sponsored by the Association of American Universities and funded in 1949 by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. The report of the Commission on Financing Higher Education was entitled, "Nature and Needs of Higher Education" and sold for $2.50. John Millett, executive director, wrote the staff report which was subtitled, "Financing Higher Education in the United States." The staff report was also published

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by Columbia University Press and was available for $6.00. A third volume sponsored by the Commission was written by Richard H. Ostheimer and entitled "Student Charges and Financing Higher Education."

Part One of *Development and Scope* was written by Richard Hofstadter and covers much the same territory that he and Walter Metzger covered in *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (1955). Hofstadter's discussion of institutions is more extensive in the latter book, but here he gives a superb overview of the historical development of college curricula.

The "Yale Report of 1828" is a detailed apology for the classical curriculum and the theory of mental discipline (See Page 5).

In the "age of the college" (Harvard to Johns Hopkins) Hofstadter discusses the early reasons for founding colleges, their struggles and successful evolution or demise. Early curricula were adaptations of the English version of medieval courses of study—aiming for orthodoxy and based on the belief in classical literacy and philosophical studies.

A college curriculum reveals, according to Hofstadter, what the educated community believed worthy of passing along—and the kind of mind and character a college education was expected to produce. The assumptions of such a curriculum were: (1) the belief that education was for gentlemen, (2) a particular conception of knowledge, namely that truth is fixed and should be transferred to others, and (3) a particular theory of mind. The "Yale Report of 1828" is a detailed apology for the classical curriculum and the theory of mental discipline.

When the "old system" gave way to science and technical courses, new technical institutes were created. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (1824), Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School (1847), and Yale's Sheffield Scientific School (1847) were the forerunners of these new curricula and were followed by Dartmouth's Chandler School of Science and Arts, the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, and Cooper Union in the 1850s, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1861.

The "age of the university" began with the founding of Cornell (1868)—with a gift of $500,000—and the election of Charles William Eliot as president of Harvard in 1869. Johns Hopkins was founded in 1867 with a gift of 3.4 million dollars, Vanderbilt in 1875 with a gift of $1.0 million, Stanford in 1891 with $20 million, and Chicago in 1891 with a gift of $30 million from John D. Rockefeller. Hofstadter does not tell us how much it costed to found Tulane (1884) and Clark University (1889).

With the advent of the modern university, college enrollments increased from 67,350 in 1870 to 156,756 in 1890 and then jumped to 355,215 in 1910. By 1948 the latest enrollment figure available to Hofstadter was 2,230,000 students.

In the appointment of university presidents, secularization was evidenced by Eliot's background in chemistry, Gilman's specialization in geography, Hall's Ph.D. in psychology, and Jordan's major field of biology. Arthur Twining Hadley, an economist, was the first lay president of Yale (1899), and Woodrow Wilson, a political scientist, was the first at Princeton (1902). "The rising university," Hofstadter wrote, "remedied many of the defects of the old college, only to create new ones of its own." Both the college and the university, however, were effective agencies of social mobility.

The American people had a profound faith in the civil uses of education but not a profound understanding of education's cultural content.

Hofstadter gives us his appreciation of the difficulties in changing college curricula. All academic disciplines have known rejection by traditionalists, and each has had difficulty in making a place for itself in the undergraduate curriculum. Agriculture, despite the blessings of the Morrill Act, was slowly implemented because of its capture by "old-style educators" *and* the attitude of many farmers that agricultural colleges could contribute little to the vocation of farming. With the establishment of agricultural experiment stations (Hatch Act, 1887) and cooperative extension services (Smith-Lever, 1914), agriculture became a more credible field of college study. And with federal funding of vocational education in high schools (Smith-Hughes, 1917), agricultural colleges established better relations with secondary schools.[3]

As colleges adopted elective systems, the shackles of the classical curriculum were first loosened and then ridiculed by those advocating vocational and scientific programs of study. "The idealistic old college gave way to a new one with an excessive bias" and:

> *The attempt to be "scientific" . . . spread from the sciences themselves into every sphere of intellectual life. Law schools tried to teach "scientific" law, historians to write "scientific" history, and even classists, trying to be "scientific," turned to philology. (p.57)*

Graduate education was slow to coalesce into disciplined inquiry because of English conceptions of advanced study. Graduate schools apparently awaited "architects" trained in German universities. Legal education, despite the social, economic, and political status of lawyers, was accepted slowly by universities because of the influence of free-standing schools and state laws permitting future lawyers an option of "reading law" with a practicing attorney. As concepts of the law changed from "general, decisive, abstract norms of prior and binding value" to an instrument to be used "in the interests . . . of litigants in a particular situation," university-based law schools became more influential.

Medical schools were the last of the major professional schools to be thoroughly affected by the scientific revolution, and business education was one of the last areas to become a matter of specialized higher education (in 1952). Despite Robert E. Lee's proposal for a school of commerce at Washington and Lee, the Wharton School at Pennsylvania was not established until 1881 and only then with a liberal arts faculty with little interest in or sympathy with business as a field of academic study. Business programs followed at Chicago and California in 1898 and were eventually accepted—despite Veblen's thesis that business education was incompatible with disinterested inquiry and Flexner's plea that business schools not "short circuit" experience in their supply of advertisers, salesmen, and handy men.[4]

> *"The rising university," Hofstadter wrote, "remedied many of the defects of the old college, only to create new ones of its own."*

In assessing the status and progress of higher learning in America, Hofstadter wrote that "at its best" it compared favorably with higher education elsewhere. In fulfilling their community obligations institutions of higher learning have "an enviable record." In their undergraduate, graduate, and professional education programs, U.S. colleges and universities were educating a larger proportion of the nation's population than anywhere else. A "bottleneck" in social mobility had been broken by American higher education and notable advances were being made in practically every sphere of human knowledge. College campuses were a haven for creative artists, as well as teachers and scholars.

Unfortunately, Hofstadter continues, higher learning in America was "also beset with many vexations, and cramped by

limitations . . ." The American people had a profound faith in the civil uses of education but not a profound understanding of education's cultural content. Higher education had developed in a businesslike culture without cultural traditions that predate industrialism and commercialism. In such a culture there is a reluctance to admit that "enjoyment of the life of the mind is a legitimate and important consummation in itself." Education was justified apologetically as useful to the attainment of other ends and rarely did Americans say that it was "good for man." In a footnote (p.106) Hofstadter explains that college and university presidents were not cultivated men and the humanities, thus, did not survive and flourish.

Hofstadter also found that the mass character of American higher education and the diversity of its services "has been the excessively vocational, excessively practical, and unbelievably trivial nature of much of its work. . . ." It was a mistake, he thought, to scatter educational resources instead of concentrating on a few university centers, in the manner of Oxford and Cambridge.

The scattering of educational resources had resulted in a pluralistic structure of higher education and many marginal institutions that afforded no status gratification for college faculty members. In turn, college faculties felt a high degree of self-alienation and "a corrosive self-disdain" that was detrimental to working morale.

A salient feature of American higher education was the fact that financial support was always tied to or contingent upon control. "The church, the state, and businessmen have all been . . . quite generous . . . [but the nation's low esteem for education] has given them license for looking to education for a *quid pro quo*." Control by outsiders was nothing new to American colleges but had been a fact of academic life from the beginning. European universities evolved from the needs of an established learned class but American colleges had sprung up in communities with slender means and their teaching faculties were mostly clergymen and magistrates. Thus, American college faculties did not govern themselves and given the complexities of financial and administrative problems, Hofstadter doubted that they wanted self-government.

Hofstadter identified as higher education's most unfortunate "single feature" the assumption that education ought to pay its own way, that it must continuously justify itself to others!

Hardy states that general education came into use because liberal education carried too many connotations of an obsolete aristocrary.

Concluding his section of the volume, Hofstadter identified as higher education's most unfortunate "single feature" the assumption that education ought to pay its own way, that it must continuously justify itself to others! The "ultimate criterion" of higher education's place in the nation's values is, he thought, the extent to which education is esteemed as an end in itself!

Part Two of *Development and Scope* was written by DeWitt Hardy, who served on the staff of the Commission on Financing Higher Education. Hardy's thesis, entitled, "The Advancement of Knowledge," is the transformation by modern scholarship and scientific method of research into a profession. Specialization, however, was recognized (1952) as too much of a good thing. Knowledge was advanced through premature theories and hunches, as well as a thorough grounding in one's

The Yale Report of 1828

YALE CURRICULUM IN 1824	
FRESHMEN	Livy, Xenophon, Herodotus, Thucydides, a textbook on "Roman Antiquities", and algebra, geography, grammar;
SOPHOMORES	Horace, Demosthenes, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle, Cicero, Euclid, and geometry, trigonometry, rhetoric;
JUNIORS	Cicero, Homer, Tacitus, spherical trigonometry, Enfeld's text on natural philosophy, astronomy, a text on history, Hebrew (optional), and lectures in natural philosophy;
SENIORS	Paley on moral philosophy, natural theology, and evidence of Christianity, Stewart's Philosophy of Mind, rhetoric, logic, Locke's Essays, and lectures on chemistry, mineralogy, geology, and natural philosophy;
Also read through the first three years was *Graeca Majora*	
NOTE:	*The Yale faculty consisted of the president, five professors, and eight tutors.*

specialty. Hardy concurs that without a larger systematic order to serve as a pattern, the construction of theory in specialized fields was more likely to produce vague generalities than valid generalizations.

In discussing the role of general education in college curricula, Hardy states that general education came into use because liberal education carried too many connotations of an obsolete aristocracy. There was no doubt, however, that general education was trying to recover for college students much of what liberal education had formerly claimed as its purpose. Because of this, there are at least two definitions of general education that should be remembered: (1) general education as a common body of knowledge that all people should have—and leading to a standardized, required curriculum; and (2) general education as a means of training students in the processes of learning (i.e. what they learn is not as important as how they learn).[3]

In 1952 Hardy perceived general education as tightening up the curriculum by requiring coursework in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. He more or less "rests his case" on his belief that:

> *The ability to choose rightly . . . depends upon more than the understanding of society and the physical environment. It depends upon man's vision of what he can be. To protect this vision from fantasy, nothing is more effective than the study of what he has been at his greatest and what he has greatly done. This is essentially what the humanities propose to study—man, the creator, his noblest creations . . . the creative achievements of literature, the fine arts, and philosophy.* (p.217)

ENDNOTES

1. Cameron Fincher, George Keller, Grady Bogue, and John Thelin, *One Hundred Classic Books About Higher Education*. (Forthcoming).
2. Hofstadter's two other books, remaining on the list, are *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States*, co-authored with Walter P. Metzger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955) and *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963).
3. Eddy, Edward D., Jr., *Colleges for our Land and Time: The Land-Grant Idea in American Education*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).
4. Veblen, Thorstein, *The Higher Learning In America*. (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1918; Reprint from New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994); and Abraham Flexner, *Universities: English, German, American*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930.
5. See Daniel Bell, *The Reforming of General Education: The Columbia College Experience in its National Setting*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966) for later discussions of general education.

THIS ISSUE . . .

This issue of IHE PERSPECTIVES is the eleventh in a series beginning in June 1998. It carries the date of February 2000 for no reason other than the previous issue was dated December 1999. The April and June issues await "finishing touches" that will make each more readable. In the meantime, readers can subscribe online to IHE PERSPECTIVES at:

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